

BUSINESS RECYCLING CASE STUDY

Nature's Treasures – May 2016

Austin, Texas



"We want to make sure we are doing all that we can to ensure recyclable materials are being utilized. We are so glad to be a part of Austin's Zero Waste effort!"

- Jeff Gray, Nature's Treasures

NATURE'S TREASURES - BUSINESS OVERVIEW:

- Bringing rocks from all reaches of the earth to Austin since 2000
- Sells geological gems from 25¢ to \$125,000
- Hosts metaphysical and community events, classes and seminars
- Over 1200 sales every week

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RECYCLING HIGHLIGHTS:

- » Saving about \$800/year by using reusable water bottles
- » Launched an onsite composting program, reducing landfill trash needs
- » Swapped Styrofoam packaging for compostable pellets
- » Avoided buying nearly 8,740 disposable bottles by switching to a water filtration system
- » Connected with businesses to reuse 10 cubic yards of shredded paper after event

Challenges. Nature's Treasures previously self-hauled waste from their operations, including a rock depot, a retail store and a community event center for classes, fairs and rentals. Nature's Treasures staff was aware of the URO, and looking for guidance on how to make it cost-effective for the business.

Solutions. Nature's Treasures contacted Austin Resource Recovery's (ARR) Business Outreach Team for a free Zero Waste Assessment. ARR suggested contracting services to ensure materials were recycled. ARR highlighted low-effort, high-impact actions to reduce service capacity levels, such as:

- Switching to reusable water bottles
- Editing contract language to require recycling at the event center
- Using [Austin Materials Marketplace](#) to divert hard-to-recycle materials

Results. Shortly after the Zero Waste Assessment with ARR, Nature's Treasures

- Contracted recycling services
- Installed a water filtration system
- Bought employees reusable water bottles, saving over \$800/year
- Started an onsite composting program
- Exchanged Styrofoam packing peanuts for compostable pellets
- Found 2 businesses via AMM to reuse 10 cubic yards of shredded paper
- Joined ARR's Zero Waste Business Rebate Program

The operational changes helped the business get accepted into the Austin Green Business Leaders program.

Success Factors. For Nature's Treasures, recycling efforts started with one employee. With the help of ARR staff, a business case was made to management for expanding recycling efforts and starting composting. With management committed and staff engaged, the business saw fast results.

Looking Forward. Nature's Treasures plans to assess what remains in their trash to divert more material and identify reduction opportunities. Since containers currently overflow, an increase in recycling capacity is likely. These measures should result in greater cost savings as landfill services are double recycling costs. Nature's Treasures' sustainability efforts prove it truly rocks!

BUSINESS PROFILE:

Business Type » Retail store, rock depot and community event center
Neighborhood » Cherrywood
Zip Code » 78722
Building » 14,987 sq. ft.
Employees » 10
New to recycling? » No! Previously collected and sold aluminum, and reused small cardboard boxes for customers to carry out purchases.

AUSTIN RESOURCE RECOVERY

Austin Resource Recovery's Business Outreach Team offers free consulting services to help businesses reduce waste, recycle materials and comply with Austin's Universal Recycling Ordinance (URO). Please contact us at:
P » (512) 974-9727

E » commercialrecycling@austintexas.gov

RESOURCES

www.austinmaterialsmarketplace.org
www.austintexas.gov/zwbizrebate
www.austintexas.gov/departament/austin-green-business-leaders



Employee recycling area, April 2016